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## THE INFLUENCE OF CONFUCIAN IDEALS ON POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES IN SOUTH KOREA AND JAPAN

Confucianism, with its philosophical principles and historical significance, has played a crucial role in shaping the sociopolitical landscapes of East Asia, particularly in Korea and Japan. Originating in China, Confucian ideals emphasize moral virtue, social order, and hierarchical structures, influencing various aspects of society. This study focuses on the lasting impact of Confucianism on political leadership and institutional practices in both countries, analyzing how these values have been integrated and adapted within their governance systems. In Korea, Confucianism served as the foundation of governance during the Joseon Dynasty, contributing to the development of a bureaucratic state rooted in Neo-Confucian thought. In Japan, Confucian principles were incorporated alongside Shinto and Buddhist traditions, creating a distinct political culture that emphasizes meritocratic leadership and hierarchical order. The research utilizes a qualitative approach, drawing on historical documents, scholarly articles, and governmental resources to examine the ongoing influence of Confucian values. By comparing the political structures and leadership styles of both countries, the study aims to identify similarities and differences in their application of Confucian ideals. The findings are expected to contribute to academic discussions on the integration of cultural values in political systems, providing valuable insights for policymakers and scholars. Understanding these traditions can inform the development of culturally sensitive governance strategies, fostering more harmonious and contextually relevant political frameworks in East Asia and beyond.

**Key words:** confucianism, political leadership, institutional practices, historical influence, South Korea, Japan.

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### Конфуцийлік идеалдардың Оңтүстік Корея мен Жапониядағы саяси басшылыққа және институционалдық тәжірибелерге ықпалы

Конфуций ілімі және оның философиялық принциптері мен тарихи мәні Шығыс Азияның әлеуметтік-саяси ландшафттарын қалыптастыруда, әсіресе Оңтүстік Корея мен Жапонияда шешуші рөл атқарды. Қытайда пайда болған конфуцийлік идеалдар моральдық ар-ұждан, қоғамдық тәртіп және иерархиялық құрылымдарды атап көрсетіп, қоғамның әртүрлі аспектілеріне әсер етті. Бұл зерттеуде конфуцийлік идеалдардың екі елде саяси басшылық пен институционалдық тәжірибелерге ұзақ мерзімді ықпалы қарастырылады, сондай-ақ осы құндылықтардың басқару жүйелеріне қалай интеграцияланғаны және бейімделгені талданады. Оңтүстік Кореяда конфуций ілімі Чосон дәуірінде басқарудың негізі болып, неоконфуцийлік ойға негізделген бюрократиялық мемлекеттің қалыптасуына ықпал етті. Жапонияда конфуцийлік принциптер синтоизм мен буддизм дәстүрлерімен қатар қабылданып, ерекше саяси мәдениеттің қалыптасуына әсер етіп, меритократиялық басшылық пен иерархиялық тәртіпті дәріптеді. Мақалада сапалық әдіснаманы қолдана отырып, тарихи құжаттар, ғылыми мақалалар және мемлекеттік ресурстарды пайдалана отырып, конфуцийлік құндылықтардың қазіргі ықпалы зерттеледі. Екі елдің саяси құрылымдары мен басқару стильдерін салыстыра отырып, зерттеу конфуцийлік идеалдарды қолданудағы ұқсастықтар мен айырмашылықтарды анықтауға бағытталған. Зерттеу нәтижелері мәдени құндылықтарды саяси жүйелерге интеграциялау жөніндегі академиялық пікірталастарға ықпал етіп, саясаткерлер мен ғалымдарға пайдалы пікірлер ұсынуға үміттенеді. Бұл дәстүрлерді түсіну мәдени сезімтал басқару стратегияларын әзірлеуге көмектесіп, Шығыс Азияда және одан тыс жерде контекстке сәйкес келетін саяси құрылымдарды қалыптастыруға ықпал етуі мүмкін.

**Түйін сөздер:** конфуцийшілдік, саяси көшбасшылық, институционалдық тәжірибе, тарихи ықпал, Оңтүстік Корея, Жапония.

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**Влияние конфуцианских идеалов на политическое руководство и институциональные практики в Южной Корее и Японии**

Конфуцианство с его философскими принципами и историческим значением сыграло решающую роль в формировании социально-политических ландшафтов Восточной Азии, особенно в Корее и Японии. Возникнув в Китае, конфуцианские идеалы подчеркивают моральную добродетель, общественный порядок и иерархические структуры, влияя на различные аспекты общества. Это исследование фокусируется на долгосрочном влиянии конфуцианства на политическое лидерство и институциональные практики в обеих странах, анализируя, как эти ценности были интегрированы и адаптированы в их системах управления. В Корее конфуцианство служило основой управления во времена династии Чосон, способствуя развитию бюрократического государства, укорененного в неоконфуцианской мысли. В Японии конфуцианские принципы были включены наряду с синтоистскими и буддийскими традициями, создавая особую политическую культуру, которая подчеркивает меритократическое лидерство и иерархический порядок. Исследование использует качественный подход, опираясь на исторические документы, научные статьи и правительственные ресурсы для изучения продолжающегося влияния конфуцианских ценностей. Сравнивая политические структуры и стили руководства обеих стран, исследование направлено на выявление сходств и различий в применении ими конфуцианских идеалов. Ожидается, что результаты будут способствовать академическим дискуссиям об интеграции культурных ценностей в политические системы, предоставляя ценные идеи для политиков и ученых. Понимание этих традиций может дать информацию о разработке культурно-чувствительных стратегий управления, способствуя более гармоничным и контекстуально релевантным политическим структурам в Восточной Азии и за ее пределами.

**Ключевые слова:** конфуцианство, политическое лидерство, институциональные практики, историческое влияние, Южная Корея, Япония.

**Introduction**

Confucianism, with its deep historical roots and philosophical foundations, has profoundly influenced the sociopolitical landscapes of East Asia, particularly in Korea and Japan. Originating from China, Confucian ideals emphasize moral virtue, social harmony, and hierarchical structures, all of which have permeated various dimensions of Asian society. In the context of political leadership and institutional practices, Confucian values provide a framework for understanding how cultural and philosophical norms shape governance and societal norms.

In Korea, Confucianism became the bedrock of societal and governmental organization during the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910), leading to the establishment of a bureaucratic state steeped in Neo-Confucian thought (Kim S., 2023). This legacy continues to impact modern Korean governance, where Confucian values such as respect for authority and collectivism play a significant role (Kim J., 2022; Huang M., 2024). Meanwhile, in Japan, Confucian thought complemented existing Shinto and Buddhist influences, integrating these principles into its political and educational systems. The result was a unique adaptation that stresses a meritocratic lead-

ership aligned with Confucian hierarchical ideals, albeit interpreted through a distinctly Japanese lens (Moon M., 2023).

The influence of Confucian ideals on political leadership and institutional practices in Korea and Japan presents both an intriguing and complex subject, particularly in the context of modern challenges. Confucianism, with its emphasis on hierarchical structures, moral virtue, and social harmony, provides a framework that has historically underpinned governance and societal norms in these countries. However, as Korea and Japan navigate the pressures of modernization and globalization, understanding the role of Confucianism in their political systems becomes crucial. Despite the longstanding integration of Confucian values within East Asian political contexts, there is a significant gap in understanding the contemporary dynamics of how these values impact political leadership and institutional practices, particularly in Korea and Japan. These societies are encountering transformative global forces that increasingly challenge traditional values, resulting in a conflict between Confucian ideals and the demands of modern democracy and economics. In Korea, for instance, the tension lies in balancing respect for authority, a core Confucian value, with the demands of a vibrant democracy. In Japan, reconciling merito-

cratic leadership derived from Confucian principles with rapidly changing social values presents another layer of complexity.

Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive and comparative studies analyzing the specific impacts of Confucian values on Korean and Japanese political frameworks. This study is necessary to fill the identified research gaps and to provide an understanding of how Confucian principles are harnessed or transformed within the political landscapes of Korea and Japan. As demonstrated by scholars, discussions around Confucianism often highlight its dual potential to support political stability and its capacity to adapt under democratic frameworks (Ip K., 2023; Tseng R., 2020; Huang M., 2024). With globalization continuing to reshape political and social orders, understanding Confucianism's evolving role is vital for devising culturally sensitive governance practices that align with both historical contexts and modern exigencies.

This study aims to investigate the enduring influence of Confucian ideals on political leadership and institutional practices in Korea and Japan. By leveraging historical and contemporary analyses, the research seeks to uncover how these philosophical tenets have been reshaped and internalized within the political frameworks of both countries. Furthermore, it strives to highlight the similarities and divergences in their application, offering insights into the evolving roles of Confucianism in these societies. The research employs a comprehensive qualitative methodology, beginning with an extensive literature review. This will include scholarly articles, historical documents, and existing critiques on Confucianism's influence in East Asia (Jiang-Fu L., 2021; Rošker J., 2022). Moreover, the study is utilizing official governmental resources and policy documents from Korean and Japanese online platforms to assess the real-world application of Confucian values (Ip K., 2023; Kim S., 2023). Analyzing these materials will provide a robust understanding of how these traditional philosophies have shaped and continue to influence contemporary political institutions and leadership styles.

Additionally, the comparative aspect of this study will offer insights into how Confucianism can be utilized to balance tradition with innovation, thereby fostering both cultural preservation and political progress in diverse sociopolitical settings. As previous research indicates, the ongoing interaction between Confucian values and democratic developments demonstrates that Confucianism is not merely a historical relic, but a dynamic, evolving ideology that can coexist with contemporary

political systems (Fetzer J., 2010). This study's findings have the potential to significantly impact both academic discourse and policy-making strategies. By exploring the influence of Confucian ideals on modern political leadership in Korea and Japan, this research aims to elucidate the complex interplay between tradition and modernity. The findings are anticipated to significantly impact both academic discourse and practical policy development, offering new frameworks for understanding and integrating cultural values in governance. The study is in line with ongoing academic and political discussions about the influence of traditional ideologies on the development of modern societies, making it particularly pertinent and timely in the context of today's globalized world.

### ***Confucianism and its philosophical principles in post-industrial societies of Eastern countries***

Confucianism maintains a significant influence on the cultural and social frameworks of Eastern countries as they transition into post-industrial societies. The acceleration of technological advancements and globalization presents challenges that can be effectively navigated through the Confucian philosophical lens. Central to Confucianism are principles like «ren» (love of mankind, benevolence), «li» (rites and social norms), «xiao» (filial piety), and «yi» (righteousness), which crucially inform interpersonal relationships, organizational conduct, and ethical decision-making processes within these societies.

The principle of «ren», centering on compassion and empathy, remains crucial for strengthening community bonds and supporting moral integrity. In the context of societies evolving towards technology-driven landscapes, «ren» serves as an ethical counterbalance to the rising individualism often seen accompanying digital transformations (Kwek, A., 2010). «Li», representative of social norms and rituals, plays an essential role in maintaining order and harmony within contemporary organizations (Fetzer J., 2010). It can be adapted to meet modern workplace dynamics, thereby preserving traditional values within organizational culture.

Xiao, or filial piety, confronts the challenge of reconciling traditional familial expectations with modern individualism. By reinterpreting «xiao», societies can achieve a balance between personal ambitions and familial duties, promoting intergenerational harmony and comprehension. Meanwhile, «yi», emphasizing justice and moral obligation, is integral in shaping ethical standards within legal and corporate domains (Cline E., 2014). It advocates for

accountability and fair practices, even in increasingly complex professional environments.

In the educational sector, Confucian thought significantly influences moral development alongside academic and technical training. This ethical focus enriches educational practices, promoting a holistic form of learning that aligns with Confucian ideals while fostering moral self-cultivation (Tan S., 2012). Furthermore, the collectivist ethos inherent in Confucianism contrasts the rise in individualism. By creatively melding collectivist principles with individual liberties, societies can craft a cultural narrative that honors traditional values while adapting to global influences (Li Z., 2018).

In governance, Confucian values advocate meritocracy, aligning with modern preferences for competence-driven leadership. The synthesis of meritocracy with democratic ideals presents both challenges and opportunities. Developing governance models that integrate meritocratic efficiency with democratic participation could enhance societal resilience. Confucianism's emphasis on social harmony can steer policies aimed at reducing inequalities, fostering stability, and ensuring sustainable development (Duan D., 2014; Xu Y., 2024). Finally, Confucian principles also impact business strategy and corporate culture. For instance, Confucianism has shown to positively influence analytical business strategies and promote corporate social responsibility. Businesses operating within a Confucian context tend to focus on practices that alleviate managerial myopia and foster a human-centric approach, translating into better financial performance and innovation outputs (Huang M, 2024).

The relevance of Confucianism in post-industrial Eastern societies lies in its ability to serve as both a cultural anchor and a guide for modern adaptation. By synthesizing traditional principles with contemporary challenges and needs, Eastern countries can develop a neo-Confucian framework that supports an ethically grounded, future-oriented social fabric. This approach not only safeguards cultural heritage but also cultivates a dynamic environment conducive to innovation and ethical leadership, ultimately aligning with the aspirations of a globalized society (Wang M., 2024; Chon K., 2020). In summary, the origins and values of Confucianism have profoundly influenced various aspects of life in Asian countries. From shaping family structures and influencing democratic ideals to fostering economic development and guiding educational practices, Confucian values continue to play a significant role in the region's socio-economic and cultural landscapes. The adaptability and enduring relevance of these values

highlight the complex interplay between tradition and modernity in East Asian societies.

### ***The Historical Influence of Confucianism on the Political Systems of Korea and Japan***

Confucianism has indelibly influenced the political systems of Korea and Japan, embedding itself within the governance frameworks and societal values of both nations. This philosophical system, originating in China, found fertile ground across East Asia, undergoing regional adaptations that have left a lasting impact on local political culture and structures.

In Korea, Confucianism's profound influence began during the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), where it became the state ideology. The institutionalization of Confucianism marked a pivotal shift towards a bureaucratic governance model founded on meritocratic principles – an approach deeply reflective of Confucian values. The civil service examination system, pivotal in this transition, prioritized moral integrity and scholarly merit – hallmarks of Confucian ethics (Li Z., 2018). This system underscored the importance of ethical governance and societal harmony, aligning with Confucian tenets like filial piety and righteousness. The ongoing impact of these principles is evident in modern Korean society, where they continue to shape hierarchical respect and communal dynamics both in societal organization and corporate practices.

Japan experienced a distinct trajectory in its assimilation of Confucianism, largely mediated through cultural exchanges with China during the Asuka and Nara periods (6th to 8th centuries). Initially coexisting with Buddhism, Confucian ideals gradually permeated the Japanese political landscape, especially during the Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1868). During this period, Neo-Confucianism emerged as the prevailing ideology, supporting the centralized feudal system through principles of loyalty, filial piety, and social duty (Tan S., 2012). These Confucian ideals not only reinforced the shogunate's authority but also solidified a stable social order. Although Confucianism may not overtly dominate contemporary political discourse in Japan, its influences subtly persist in societal norms, educational values, and corporate governance, underpinning a cultural emphasis on hierarchy and harmony.

The historical evolution of Confucianism in both Korea and Japan reveals its adaptability and deep integration into local political and social systems. Confucianism provided a foundational philosophical framework that profoundly shaped governance models, influencing bureaucratic practices

and reinforcing social hierarchies (Chon K., 2020). The resilience and durability of Confucian values are particularly noteworthy as both countries have transitioned into modernity, where these principles continue to inform political ideologies and institutions in nuanced forms.

Understanding the historical influence of Confucianism on the political systems of Korea and Japan is crucial for appreciating how these enduring cultural legacies inform contemporary governance. This insight underscores Confucianism's role in fostering societal resilience and cohesion amidst changing global dynamics, illustrating how traditional philosophical systems can adapt and thrive within modern contexts (Sin T., 2012). By examining these historical influences, one gains a richer understanding of how Confucianism contributes to the cultural heritage that shapes political thought and behavior in Eastern Asia today.

#### ***The influence of Confucian thought on political leadership in South Korea and Japan***

Confucianism has played a significant role in shaping the political leadership frameworks and cultural environments of South Korea and Japan, offering a philosophical basis that continues to guide governance and societal conventions in both countries. The adaptation and integration of Confucian principles have yielded distinct impacts in each country, reflecting their unique historical and cultural contexts.

In South Korea, Confucianism became entrenched as the dominant ideological framework during the Joseon Dynasty, significantly affecting political leadership and administration. This period saw the establishment of a meritocratic bureaucratic system, heavily influenced by Confucian values such as hierarchy, filial piety, and ethical governance. The civil service exams during this era ensured that leaders were chosen based on their moral conduct and scholarly capabilities, promoting a culture of ethical leadership and deep respect for authority within Korean society. The lingering impact of these principles is still evident in modern South Korean political leadership, where the emphasis on education, social welfare, and communal harmony reflects persistent Confucian ideals. Public policies often underscore the importance of education, mirroring Confucian advocacy for moral and intellectual development (Rhyu, M., 2024). Furthermore, political leaders prioritize consensus-building and collective well-being, which aligns with the Confucian emphasis on social harmony and hierarchical respect.

Japan's assimilation of Confucianism was notably intensified during the Tokugawa shogunate when Neo-Confucianism became a significant force in shaping governance and social order. The Tokugawa regime utilized Confucian ideals to legitimize its feudal hierarchy, integrating notions of duty, loyalty, and hierarchical respect into the governance philosophy. These ideals resonated with samurai ethics, thereby reinforcing social stratification and centralized authority. Although modern Japan may not overtly acknowledge Confucianism, its subtle influences persist in political practices and societal norms. Japanese political leadership tends to reflect Confucian values through an emphasis on group harmony, respect for hierarchy, and decision-making processes that prioritize collective consensus over individual agendas (Tan S., 2012). These cultural norms are clearly manifest in corporate and bureaucratic environments, where loyalty and lifetime employment echo the Confucian ideals of loyalty and duty. Political processes in Japan often involve extensive consultation and consensus-building, underscoring the lasting imprint of Confucian thought on leadership approaches.

However, Confucianism's emphasis on hierarchical order and authority contrasts starkly with modern democratic ideals characterized by individual rights and participatory governance (Ip K., 2023: 89). This struggle is seen most vividly in the leadership contexts of South Korea and Japan, where the ethical governance prescribed by Confucianism often squares against the pragmatic needs of contemporary governance. The expectation for leaders to embody virtues such as integrity and benevolence can lead to public disillusionment when these ideals are perceived as unattained, suggesting an ongoing tension between traditional values and the realities of political roles today (Tong Z., 2024). Moreover, the concept of ethical leadership from a Confucian perspective isn't inherently incompatible with modern governance, as suggested by discussions on political strategies like mini-publics, which offer a platform for integrating deliberative democratic processes with Confucian values of harmony and dialogue.

While both South Korea and Japan have woven Confucianism into their political and cultural fabrics, the specific manifestations differ across these nations due to their distinct historical trajectories. In South Korea, Confucianism is more explicit in political rhetoric and public policy, impacting societal governance and educational frameworks (Rhyu, M., 2024). Conversely, in Japan, Confucian influences are more implicit, supporting social norms

and collective leadership approaches that emphasize harmony and consensus (Li Z., 2018). Despite these differences, both countries illustrate how Confucianism provides a moral framework that emphasizes ethical responsibility, social stability, and respect for hierarchy. These shared influences highlight the adaptability and resilience of Confucian principles, supporting governance systems that balance tradition with modern political and economic demands.

The influence of Confucianism on political leadership in South Korea and Japan highlights the enduring power of philosophical traditions to shape governance and societal expectations. Confucian values advocating for ethical leadership, authority respect, and social harmony continue to inform political ideologies and leadership practices in both nations, though in culturally distinct manners (Rhyu, M., 2024). This analysis highlights the intricate relationship between traditional philosophical systems and modern political structures, demonstrating how these historical legacies persist in shaping leadership dynamics in a more interconnected global landscape (Choi E., 2018). As these countries navigate modern challenges, the Confucian heritage provides guiding principles that support social cohesion and ethical governance, fostering environments conducive to stability and shared prosperity.

#### ***Application of Confucian values in modern institutional practices***

The incorporation of Confucian values into modern institutional practices in South Korea and Japan demonstrates a seamless integration of traditional philosophies into contemporary frameworks. This blend not only respects cultural heritage but also addresses modern socio-economic challenges, enriching both corporate and educational landscapes. In South Korea, the influence of Confucianism is most palpable within chaebols, the large family-controlled industrial conglomerates. These organizations are characterized by hierarchical structures, where seniority and loyalty are paramount (Lew S., 2011). The Confucian emphasis on loyalty and respect for authority shapes decision-making processes that often rely on collective consensus, fostering environments of stability and harmony essential for long-term business strategy (Choi E., 2018). This consensus-building approach, embedded in Confucian ideals, supports the collective organizational responsibility, aligning with broader societal preferences for stability and cohesion.

Similarly, Japanese corporate environments reflect Confucian values through practices such as

lifetime employment and seniority-based promotions, aimed at preserving group harmony and long-term relationships (Ryu K., 2011). Such practices underscore the importance of loyalty and collective well-being over short-term financial gains, shaping a resilient corporate culture that values ethical missions over immediate profitability. Japan's decision-making processes, characterized by extensive consultation and a bottom-up approach, further illustrate Confucian principles through practices like «ringi», which facilitates internal alignment and prevents discord (Ryu K., 2011).

The educational frameworks of both countries are deeply rooted in Confucian values that place considerable importance on moral and intellectual development. In South Korea, the competitive nature of the education system reflects Confucian ideals through its rigorous academic expectations, promoting moral cultivation and self-improvement as pathways to social advancement (Ryu K., 2011). This focus on education is viewed as a cornerstone for individual and societal success, resonating with Confucian advocacy for continuous learning and ethical growth, and fostering a culture of perseverance and hard work that complements economic development (Lew S., 2011). In Japan, educational institutions similarly emphasize discipline, respect for authority, and moral education. Educational practices that include social responsibility and group activities echo Confucian ideals, nurturing a sense of duty and collective well-being among students (Kagotani, K., 2014). This structured approach not only aligns with personal academic ambitions but also integrates cultural values into the student's identity, promoting a balance between individual and collective achievements that is essential for societal harmony.

Confucian principles extend into government operations in both nations. In South Korea, Confucian values manifest through an emphasis on ethical leadership and public accountability. Government practices prioritize public service ethics and transparency, echoing Confucian ideals of righteous governance and social responsibility (Fleckenstein, T., 2017). The expectation for public officials to act with integrity underscores their duty to prioritize societal welfare, reflecting the Confucian ethos that places community above individual interests. In contrast, Japan's political processes embody Confucian values through consensus-building and a profound respect for hierarchical relationships. Extensive deliberations often precede policy decisions, ensuring collective agreement and minimizing conflict, thus

embodying Confucian ideals of social harmony and collective decision-making (Kagotani, K., 2014). This prioritization of consensus not only aids in maintaining political stability but also fosters societal cohesion, aligning with Confucian views on governance and communal harmony.

Confucian values such as loyalty and respect for hierarchy often conflict with Western business principles that favor innovation and meritocracy. This discordance is especially visible in multinational organizations operating in East Asia, necessitating a nuanced approach to integrate these differing value systems effectively. Confucian philosophical systems, as examined in business contexts, suggest that a balanced application of its ethical principles could enhance corporate governance by mitigating issues like agency problems and promoting corporate social responsibility (Chon K., 2020). Similarly, in educational practices, Confucian ideals that prioritize rote learning and moral education face pressure to adapt to global demands for innovation and critical thinking. The challenge lies in developing curricula that respect traditional educational values while fostering the critical and creative skills essential in a globalized economy.

Overall, the core issue in this context is the reconciliation of Confucian values with the exigencies of modern governance and institutional practice. The adaptability of Confucian principles in contemporary settings remains fundamental, ensuring that while tradition is honored, modernity is not stifled. Such discussions provide rich terrain for academic exploration and practical application in both political leadership and institutional frameworks, signaling a path where tradition and modernity can coexist and complement each other.

The application of Confucian values within the institutional practices of South Korea and Japan underscores their enduring influence across modern socio-economic structures. By integrating concepts such as hierarchy, loyalty, ethical leadership, and collective responsibility into the realms of corporate governance, education, and government operations, these nations successfully blend traditional philosophies with modernity. The continuous relevance of Confucian values not only supports social harmony and stability but also cultivates environments that are conducive to ethical development and sustainable prosperity. This synthesis offers a culturally rich framework that can tackle contemporary challenges without forsaking historical roots, ensuring that Confucian ideals remain significant and adaptable within an evolving global context.

## Conclusion and practical recommendations

The examination of Confucian influences on political leadership and institutional practices in South Korea and Japan underscores the profound and lasting impact of this traditional philosophy in shaping contemporary socio-political and economic frameworks in both nations. Despite different historical trajectories and external influences, both countries have adeptly integrated Confucian ideals into their modern political and institutional architectures, revealing the adaptability and enduring relevance of these values.

Confucian ideals, with their emphasis on hierarchy, loyalty, ethical conduct, and community harmony, have become deeply ingrained in South Korean and Japanese political and corporate practices. In South Korea, the rigorous educational system and structured hierarchy in both political and business domains reflect Confucian emphases on moral development and respect for authority. This focus is not only a cultural heritage but also a critical factor in driving economic and social progress. Similarly, the distinctive features of Japanese corporate practices, such as lifetime employment and seniority-based promotion, are informed by Confucian values of loyalty and group welfare, highlighting how traditional values can support modern organizational stability and harmony.

Beyond the corporate sphere, these Confucian values significantly influence governance. Although traditional Confucianism is often perceived as antithetical to democratic ideals, both nations have demonstrated its compatibility with democratic governance. In South Korea, Confucian ideas facilitate a participatory governance model that emphasizes transparency, ethical governance, and social responsibility, bridging traditional values with modern democratic principles. In Japan, Confucianism subtly popularizes collective decision-making processes and public participation, thereby enhancing governmental legitimacy and promoting social cohesion. The practical implications of integrating Confucian ideals into contemporary practices are manifold and offer valuable insights for other societies striving to balance tradition with modernization.

First, Confucianism's focus on ethical leadership provides a robust framework for developing leaders who prioritize the public good and ethical standards. This focus is crucial for cultivating trust and legitimacy within governmental structures and organizations. Confucian ideals such as stability, loyalty, and respect for hierarchical structures can guide organizations worldwide in fostering envi-

ronments of trust and long-term commitment. Such cultures are conducive to sustainable growth and employee loyalty. On the other hand, educational systems inspired by Confucianism support rigorous academic and moral formation, preparing students not only as knowledgeable workers but also as responsible citizens. These practices help instill a sense of duty and community service, aligning personal growth with societal needs.

In addition to this, in policy-making, Confucian values of consensus and social harmony can encourage more inclusive governance, address socio-political inequalities, and enhance public welfare. Finally, sensitivity to Confucian principles can significantly enhance cross-cultural interactions in multinational settings. By understanding these values, international organizations can navigate cultural differences more effectively, fostering harmonious business relationships.

In conclusion, South Korea and Japan exemplify how the enduring legacy of Confucianism can

be harmoniously integrated into modern infrastructures, enhancing both individual development and collective prosperity. Acknowledging the significance of these principles offers a guide for societies aiming to integrate cultural traditions with modern ambitions, fostering ethical development and long-lasting progress. As both nations continue to navigate global challenges, their commitment to maintaining Confucian principles alongside progressive policies offers a compelling model for others to emulate.

### Acknowledgments

This research was carried out with the grant funding of the Committee of Science of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan within the framework of the scientific project AP19677768 «Pragmatic experience of the Confucian model of Eastern countries development: China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea».

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*Келіп түсті: 10 қараша 2024 жыл*

*Қабылданды: 15 ақпан 2025 жыл*